

Every Child Learning Every Day



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READY TO LEARN

Explore the natural and mechanical

By Dr. Stan Steiner

"Exploring our world whether inside or outside gives us a new perspective on life. Children are learning every day. Give them time to wonder.

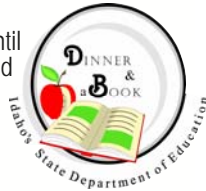
"**Groundhog Stays up Late,**" by Margery Cuyler, illustrated by Jean Cassels, 2005, Walker & Co. Groundhog decides not to hibernate. Having fun sounded good until he got hungry and his thin body could not keep him warm. His animal friends warned him. He comes up with a clever way to get their attention, but they get the last laugh.

"**Lift-the-Flap Animals,**" by Dorling Kindersley, 2005. This charming board book features bright pictures of animals around the world found in the air, the sea, at the farm, in the wild and at home.

"**It's Time,**" by Mary Ann Fraser, 2005, Walker & Co. This is the third book featuring the adorable I.Q., the class pet mouse. I.Q. secretly records the school day through images and recorded times for his part in preparing for Parent's Night. This is a great book for helping children with the concept of time.

"**Monster Machines,**" by Simon Mugford, 2005, Priddy Books. Big machines attract a lot of attention from children and adults. This is a cool book to share with little ones who have a fascination for machines. The adults might learn a few things from the detailed descriptions.

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Plan to participate in 'Read Across America'

Dear Reader:

One of the signs of spring is the annual Read Across America event sponsored by the National Education Association to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday.

This year, the official day is March 2, but many communities celebrate for a week or month. I hope you will plan to participate this year.

Reading to young children is essential to helping them develop the readiness skills needed for school, and it is fun to do.

The NEA offers these tips to parents and adults who read with very young children:

- *Snuggle with your child with her favorite blanket or toys as you read.

- *Read with expression, using different voices for different characters.

- *Emphasize rhythms and rhymes in stories. Give your toddler



Dr. Marilyn Howard
Superintendent of Public
Instruction

- opportunities to repeat rhyming phrases.

- *Use pictures to build vocabulary by varying objects and their colors and by talking about what is shown.

- *Encourage your child to repeat what you say or comment on it.

- *Encourage your child to ask questions. Provide models of interesting questions and examples of possible answers. "I wonder what is going to happen next? I think the rabbit will get lost because he is not paying attention to where he is going. What do you think?"

- *Look for books that are about things that interest your toddler. For example, does your child like cars, insects, or animals?

- *Make reading a habit for bedtime, after lunch, or after naptime.

- *Give your child a chance to choose his own books. If your toddler chooses a book that is too long to hold his attention, read some and skip some, discussing the pictures and how they relate to the story.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Avoiding 'hot lava' motivates children to move

Physical Education (P.E.) Central is a website (www.pecentral.org) where educators and others share lesson plans for activities aimed at different age groups. Below is a preschool activity from that site.

Activity
Volcano!

Purpose of activity
To help young children develop problem solving techniques through movement.

Prerequisites
Talk with children about volcanoes and what happens when they erupt.

Materials

Balance beams, poly-spots, ropes, blocks, stepping stones, hula-hoops, geo shapes, one large tumbling mat for an island, and anything else children can safely jump, walk, run, skip, or balance on.

Description

When the students begins this activity, tell them that a giant volcano has erupted and there is hot lava everywhere.

In order to avoid the hot lava, the students will need to get to the island (tumbling mat or mats) on the other side of the area.

Create a variety of ways to get to the island. For example, use balance beams, poly-spots to jump on,

stepping stones to walk across, ropes for tight-rope walking, hula hoops to walk around, etc. Have the students try and go back and forth from the starting point to the island, allowing multiple trips.

Playing background music like the "Mission Impossible Theme" from the movie soundtrack can make this activity even more exciting for the children.

Assessment ideas

Ask students to describe some of the ways that they moved their bodies to get to the island (i.e., jumping, hopping, running, balancing, etc.)



PARENT TIPS

Websites offer good info for parents

The Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children recommends three websites as good resources for parents and educators.

Talaris Research Institute (www.talaris.org) encourages the healthy development of children by providing parents with tools to raise their children effectively.

Talaris provides up-to-date, research-based information through its *Parenting Counts* program. Talaris' Research Spotlights helps parents understand how brain research and science can be applied to everyday life.

They've gathered leading research studies on social and emotional development and merged them into easy-to-read and interesting summaries and videos.

Visitors can learn about the amazing capabilities of babies and children through age 5 and how the role of parents is vital.

Exchange Every Day (www.childcareexchange.com) distributes an e-newsletter five days a week, offering a thoughtful, short article relating to education.

For 27 years, Exchange has promoted the exchange of ideas among leaders in early childhood programs worldwide through its magazine, books, seminars, and international conferences.

Exchange also sponsors the World Forum Foundation that promotes an on-going global exchange of ideas on the delivery of quality services for young children in diverse settings.

Civitas (www.civitas.org) produces *Born Learning*, a public awareness and material distribution campaign designed to inspire an active role in children's early learning.

Using the latest research in early childhood development, Civitas produces and distributes practical, easy-to-use videos and materials that assist adults in making the best possible decisions on behalf of children.

Information for parents, professionals and grandparents is available on child care, development, fathering, health & nutrition, play and more.

Subscribe to their newsletter, *Bits of Understanding*, to receive free quarterly updates and information about Civitas and child development.

NUTRITION

Snacks are important 'mini meals' for children

Young children have small stomachs, so they probably eat less at meals than you do. Healthy snacks can help your young child eat and drink enough during the day.

Most young children do best when they eat four to six times a day instead of just at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Most young children enjoy having snacks. Snacks are "mini meals" that hold your young child's hunger at bay until the next meal time.

These mini meals help provide nutrients and food energy that your young child needs to grow, play, and

learn.

To provide healthy snacks, keep food snacks handy, such as raw vegetables, fruit, juice, milk, cheese, yogurt, bread, peanut butter, and hard cooked eggs.

Let the snacks fill in the gaps. If your young child misses juice for breakfast, then offer fruit at snack time.

Snacks should be scheduled to supplement meals not replace the main meals of the day.

Time snacks carefully by serving them two to three hours before a meal. That way your child will be

hungry for lunch or dinner. Don't offer snacks to quiet tears, calm your child, or reward behavior. That can lead to emotional overeating later on. Keep snacks small. Let your child decide what is enough to fulfill his or her hunger needs.

Remember to go easy on snacks with added sugars. Offer milk, juice, or water as a snack drink.

Soft drinks and fruit drinks only add sugar to your child's daily caloric intake. A little candy occasionally is okay, but real food is the better choice when making a child's snack. Smart snacking is a good habit for all family members.

SMART STARTS

Math concepts are gained early in life

Cognitive development, or the ability to think and reason, covers many skills that children require for an understanding of some basic concepts. Math skills can begin early in life, given the opportunity.

Birth to 1 year

Read books to your child that have numbers and counting. You can count objects in your home that are the same, such as spoons and forks.

1 to 3 years old

Give your child simple choices that they can make regarding the number of crackers they have: "Would you like one or two crackers?" Show your child the difference between one and

two. They also can help sorting laundry by matching two socks of the same color.

3 to 5 years old

Measuring can be an opportunity to teach your child basic math concepts such as simple fractions and more versus less. Get a recipe and ask your child to help you make it. Let him go through the process of measuring out items with you.

Call his attention to items that you need more of and items you need less of. Use a measuring cup that shows fractions. You can also ask questions such as, "If you had two more raisins, how many would you have?"

Skills needed for kindergarten

Basic math concepts are foundational for learning addition, subtraction and advanced math skills necessary in school.

Books and other resources

"Kids' Baking: Over 60 Delicious Recipes for Children to Make" by Sarah Lewis and "One Fish, Two Fish, Three, Four, Five Fish" by Dr. Seuss.

Smart Starts is a column of everyday activities to help parents and early childhood caregivers build school readiness skills in young children. It appears weekly in the Idaho Statesman.

ART

Realistic feedback helps kids understand strengths

By Jennifer Williams
2002 Idaho Teacher of the Year

As babies become toddlers, parents become concerned with the development of a positive self-image.

Praising a child for everything isn't healthy, as the child may soon figure out that compliments are shallow or unwarranted. Or, the child may be so used to getting praised that there is a fear of failing.

Children need feedback, but it must be realistic. Feedback helps a child understand his own strengths and weaknesses and where improvement is necessary.

Praise can elevate self-esteem and

pride, giving the child a sense of accomplishment, which can transfer to other things. If the child is making or doing something creative, keep in mind that the greatest rewards are not necessarily in the finished product (as mistakes are important also), but in the effort and spirit of the process.

Ask the child these questions after making a valentine card:

What do you like about the card? (You can respond with "I like the card because...")

Which is your favorite color? ("My favorite is...")

Do you like to color in or outside the lines? (This is an opportunity for expressing that you don't always have

to stay in the lines.)

Does this card make you laugh? (Give your opinion about how the card makes you feel.)

This dialog can praise the effort (if in fact it was good), and address ways to improve. If the parent feels the effort was a bit lacking, ask why. (Were you tired or hungry when you made the card? Would you like to try another card and I'll do one too?)

The real value might come if the parent creates a card, too, and asks the child to critique it.

My experience has shown that adults have a much more difficult time, generally, taking a little constructive criticism.